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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a screening procedure for potential teachers of speech that encourages self-appraisal and provides an opportunity for the students to remove himself from the program. The author briefly examines past efforts to predict the performance of potential teachers; reviews qualities to be looked for in effective speech teachers; and outlines procedures and instruments for screening candidates for the classroom. (Author/LG)

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SHOULD YOU BECOME A TEACHER? - the Use of Screening Procedures

Dan P. Millar

One method for responding to the diminishing general market for teachers is to inaugurate screening procedures intended to remove undesirables from teacher preparation programs, and the least qualified from receiving certification. Of course, this presumes we can identify the "undesirables" and that we can devise means for determining the best--from the least qualified. The problem?--one of prediction of performance[1]--one that has plagued researchers in education, and supervisors of teacher training programs, perhaps for all time, but certainly for the past half-century. However, this area of teacher selection is virtually untouched in speech education literature. The purpose of this presentation will be to suggest a screening procedure for potential teachers of speech--a procedure that permits the student periodic comparison, self-appraisal and encourages self-removal. In order to accomplish the purpose we need to briefly examine past efforts at prediction; assert qualities to be looked for in effective speech teachers; then, outline the procedures and instruments for screening candidates for the classroom.

I

Perhaps the classroom variable that has generated the most research has been the personality of the teacher.[2] Several different personality tests have been utilized in efforts to identify personality profiles of effective teachers or persistent teachers, with the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, perhaps generating the most research. The results have been mixed. LaBue[3] found the MMPI to differentiate between teachers who showed

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a persistent interest in teaching and those who had not (persistent was defined as those who had completed a teacher education program and had accepted a position). Flanagan[4] found difference in personality patterns between female teachers where a score on scale 3 (Hy--Hysterical) was positively correlated with outstanding ratings of effectiveness from supervisory teachers. Gowgan[5] demonstrated a relationship between the K scale and teaching prognosis. The K scale has shown a positive correlation to personality adjustment in general with moderately elevated scores considered a sign of responsible, secure, friendly, non-extrapunitive behavior. (The K scale is one of the four validity scales of the MMPI reflecting a person's guardedness or defensiveness--which is used to validate the clinical scores.) Rieck[6] found differences between the profiles of students who graduated with teaching certificates and those students who dropped out of school prior to their junior year.

On the other hand, Ort[7] found no significant correlation between 6 factors on the MMPI and ratings by supervisory teachers or campus supervisors. Moore and Cole[8] were unable to distinguish between teachers rated poorest, below average, average and above average by supervising teachers. Vernon, in his book, Personality A[illegible]ment: A Critical Survey calls the practice of using the MMPI as a t[illegible] screening device deplorable because he sees no psychological evidence that "unsuitable" personality can be reliably picked-out by the Inventory. Gough, Durflinger and Hill[10] suggest that the MMPI's sensitivity to problems of maladjustment, neuroticism and anxiety would make the test relevant to the detection of characteristics ineffective in teaching--then conclude that results of research have not been encouraging.

Two general problems related to personality research a related to teaching warrant mentioning regarding the use of the MMPI: aggregate personality

scores, even single scores have been correlated against supervisory ratings, which have a notority of their own and not much variability; and, aggregate groups have been measured--an x number of teachers--yet we suspect that subject content, sexual differences, and background may breed certain types of people effective in one teaching situation but not in another. Perhaps no subject taught exposes the personality of the teacher more than speech with the close contact between students and teachers.

Partially to improve the examination of normality, the California Personality Inventory was a test spun-off from the MMPI. Using many of the items from the parent inventory, the CPI seems to asses the more normal qualities of interpersonal and interactional behavior--i.e. tolerance, self-acceptance, dominance, socialization, flexibility--which might be more related to teacher effectiveness than the qualities stressed in the MMPI.[11] In a rather sophisticated piece of research done by Gough, Durflinger and Hill,[12] they found a correlation of .36 between a five variable equation, including Flexibility, Good Impression, Sociability, Socialization and Psychological-Mindedness, and supervisory ratings of teachers. Using the equation and another group of subjects, they attempted to see how good a prediction of success they would get from the profile--how often their prediction based upon personality would have put a person in the successful or unsuccessful teacher category. They found a range of hits from a low of 56.5% for females to a high of 66.7% for males. Two out-of-3 profile predictions were accurate for male teachers. They then asked other student teachers, who had also taken the CPI to rate others on the Adjective Check List with 5 raters per person. The words most often mentioned about a persona, and the group he fell into, were then correlated with the CPI scores. A positive correlation signifying that the adjective was used differentiatelly to describe student

teachers scoring high on the CPI, a negative correlation is low. They divided the sampling by sex. Here is a sample of the adjectives that describe student teachers on the CPI; reputed in the study:

Males High	Males Low	Females High	Females Low
conscientious (.37)	reckless	dominant	curious
practical	daring	preserving	affectionate
rationale	pleasure-seeking	persistent	careless
moderate	spenthrift	serious	easy going
methodical	irresponsible	opinionated	unconventional
planful	show-off	ambitious	dreamy
responsible	flirtatious	demanding	understanding
capable	spontaneous	logical	irresponsible
thorough	adventurous	regid	cheerful
logical	mischievous	clear-thinking	natural
reasonable	quick	determined	individualistic
reserved (.2)	careless	responsible	thoughtful

These lists, completed by conceptual analysis, provide definitions of syndromes diagnosed by the CPI: if a male scores high on the equation he will resemble the first portrait with the likelihood that supervisors will see him as an effective teacher.

Of course, other personality tests have been used--like the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (with the MMPI is reported to be the most used test administered to future teachers). In a study by Eberlein[13] he found differences between women elementary school teachers and women in general, according to EPPS norms, on the needs for Exhibition, Autonomy, Intraception Dominance, Change and Heterosexuality while lower on the needs for Order, Succorance, Abasement, Nurtance and Endurance. He concludes that this research replicated earlier findings using the EPPS. I was able to find no evidence of a longitudinal prediction of teacher success in the literature, however.

A number of studies have also been done on the personality of teachers using the Cattell Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire. Two studies

have shown positive results. McClain[14] utilized the 16PF to differentiate those scales which appeared related to success or failure of students teachers given supervisors ratings. When relating the factor scores, divided by sex, he found the following factors significant: men-expedient v. conscientious, restrained v. venturesome, trusting v. suspicious, conservative v. experimenting and relaxed v. tense; women--less intelligent v. more intelligent, humbel v. assertive, shy v. venturesome, sob v. happy-go-lucky, reserve v. outgoing and undisciplined self-conflict v. controlled self-conflict. Then, relating the specific personality equation to ratings of "excellent" or "poor" at student teaching, he found a statistically significant difference in personality. Wittmer and Lister,[15] making no differentiation in sex, still found a positive relationship between the 16PF regression equation and supervisor evaluation of counselors. I report this because of the nature of the relationships needed in a speech class, particularly those classes that have begun to study and experience interpersonal communication.

The point of this brief look at personality assessment has been that research has been attempting to differentiate successful from unsuccessful teachers on personality variables on the belief that personality of the teacher does make a difference; that the results of this research have not been consistent; that progress is being made particularly when sex of the teacher and experience levels have been taken into account.

But people have been trying to study other characteristics in hopes of predicting teaching successful beside personality. Ort,[16] studying the grade point average found no predictive relationship between grades and the success of a student teacher or first year teacher. On the other hand, Cornett[17] did find a positive relationship between GPA and principal ratings for secondary school teacher--.37. Torrence et al[18] examined verbal original-

ity (ratings on two forms of creative thinking tests) and found a positive relationship between the scores on the creative thining tests and eventual classroom behavior--not necessarily ratings. Separating the measurement events by 8 years he found those who scored high on creativity to be less compulisve in behavior, use more role playing, problem solving, panel discussion, classroom experiments in their classroom that did those teacher who had initially scored low on the creative thinking test.. Of course, standardized tests have also been used in hopes of predicting teacher success. Lewis[19] reports that South Carolina, West Virginia, Florida, North Carolina and California all require minimum arbitrary scores on the National Teacher Examination for certification. Texas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, New Hampshire and Vermont all require the NTE for certification or for other purpose related to certification (i.e. in lieu of certain education course, or for teachers from non-accredited schools with teacher programs).[20] In a study of student teachers scores on the NTE and the coordinators evaluation of student teaching, a positive correlation was observed of .18.[21]

At least one attitudinal test has been used with some encouraging results in predicting success in teaching--the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory. Since the test was developed as a predictor of the type of social atmosphere a teacher will maintain in the classroom, this inventory seems particularly interesting to speech teachers. Munro[22] reports difference in scores between h.s. seniors selecting teaching and those who did not; positive relationships between high MTAI scores and ratings as a "good teaching prospect" by college instructors; and, a positive relationship between high scores on the MTAI and ratings by advisor ratings of student teaching performance. Standlee and Popham[23] found a similar relationship between high MTAI scores and principals ratings of teachers in the field. In 1969, Leeds[24] reported the result of a

longitudinal study covering 15 years. With positive results particularly when the scoring was modified to compare inexperienced to inexperienced teachers attitudes. He concludes that the modified scoring might make one measure of student acceptance of a teacher by pupils and children.

The personal data of the potential teacher, as reported on data forms and questionnaires, has also been studied as a predictor. Cook[25] found that information taken from the personal data form related to entrance and retention in the teaching program (i.e. if the student said he intend to enter teaching early in his collegiate career he tended to do so). In a seven year longitudinal study, Pavalko[26] found that socioeconomic background (father's occupation, mother-father educational background, estimate of funds available for support of the student, student's perception of family wealth and income status in the community) related to the teaching profession. Two-thirds of the women he studied came from the higher socio-economic backgrounds This appears to be different from other studies and Pavalko explains that his sample was compared to the general age component of the population and not against those students already in college--a comparison in which the initial selection of socioeconomic background has already been made since many lower income people do not go to college. Aside from background, intelligence, as measured by h.s. scores on the Henmon-Nelson Test of Mental Ability also showed a positive relationship.

Personality, GPA, standardized tests, attitude, self-concept personal data have all been used to predict teaching success. Other tests have also been used. The level of predictive result is limited. Several reasons appear for this failure to verify what common sense predicts: usually the researcher manipulated only one variable at a time: supervisor ratings were used instead of pupil ratings; sexual differences have not been

accounted for; level of teaching has not; experience levels of teachers and age has also not been controlled. I do not think these criticisms make the previous research not useful and continued efforts futile. But we need to take into account these matters, at least. I might say, that in using the recent Index of the Speech Journals for guide, I found no research that bore directly on this project. We don't seem to be concerned as a profession in predicting what a successful speech teacher looks like or how he behaves in the classroom.

II

All right, what are we looking for as a speech teacher? We could list scores of attributes that our experience tells us are important. I suspect we can agree on these: knowledge competence of the subject matter, skills in the methodology of presenting the material to students, and a person who is capable of responding to others in such a way that the classroom climate encourages the student to express himself freely.

III

What screening procedures might be utilized to find people with these characteristics? Two asides are in order here before continuing: (1) many tests are being used to screen potential teachers. A survey of 443 institutions found 445 distinct titles of which 240 were identified in Buros, Tests in Print, with the other 203 being regional or local in make-up.[27] So what is being presented here really offers nothing new in intent, only practice and maybe instrument, (2) any screening involves risk--choosing between candidates--with the chance that we will include some who shouldn't be teachers and excluding those who should. Caldwell[28] says the "innocent until proven guilty" concept ought not to apply to teacher education--that the primary responsi-

bility is the potential students not the trainee candidate. Further, that based upon that criteria, the decider need be cautious but not fear decisions based upon instruments having only face or logical validity. The following procedures subscribe to that philosophy.

The screening of candidates needs to be a continuous venture undertaken by the institution. And, evaluation should take place in the classroom as instructors observe behavior of potential teachers. Deviance or concern should be expressed at the time so that any formal testing periods are not the only times a student knows he is doing well or poorly in his preparation to become a teacher. There are, however, at least three points where special screening needs to take place--that is, beyond the actual admission to the college or university.

The First Point of evaluation precedes admission into the teacher education program. Essentially, this is the point furthest removed from the future classroom, a time of limited experience and exposure and hence, the weakest in terms of criteria for selection. However, better to begin screening now--and most institutions do so at this point. Certainly, ability to handle collegiate academic work need to be assess. The GPA earned to this point in college provides some measure of the candidates chances for future success in the classroom. A 3.0 GPA or a 2.5 with periods of over 3.0 seems reasonable and at least one study[29] suggests would eliminate about one-fourth of the applicants. Special talents might permit deviance from the minimum GPA--i.e. an artist, musician, cook, actor might be retained in the teacher education at this point if they are making acceptable progression toward degrees at their universities. Frankly, future assessment at this point should be easier as universities move toward "basic competence" in course unit instead of grades. Why? By the time the student applies for the program he will have

had to demonstrate basic competence or he would still be attempting to accomplish the skills required in the content units. Until then, GPA seems a useful predictor.

But we also need to know, as does the student himself, if he is the "kind of person" who will perform in the classroom. The California Psychological Inventory, described earlier as the personality test, recommends itself. Kleinmuntz[30] asserts that this inventory may become the best personality tests of its kind--devised specifically to measure the normal population and having already demonstrated an ability to discriminate between subgroups within the general population on personality variables.

Beyond GPA and personality, oral and written competence ought to be demonstrated by the student at this point. Certainly the future teacher ought to be at least an average communicator in either mode and free from speech and hearing defects that may handicap his teaching performance. Again, the basic competence growing with the increased use of behavioral objectives, seems to make this screening easier.

I firmly believe that associated with the entire screening procedures should be a supportive program of personal and vocational counseling. For example, the results of the CPI should be made known to the candidate with his scores and profiles compared to those scores and profiles of successful teachers now in the field. He ought to see how he differs (or is similar to) those who are now doing well. The HE can choose to leave the program. He might if he likes himself and what he is and sees changing in the direction of teacher profiles undesirable. Or, he might wish to do something about the way he believes and relates to others. Counseling can help him do this. Of course, the few who differ might like what they are and choose NOT to withdraw from the program--they shouldn't be stopped. The point here is

not to arbitrarily eliminate the potential teacher because he scores a few points differently, but to let him see what a successful speech teacher has "looked like" and to compare himself. Every aspect of the potential measured here can be changed: grades and content knowledge can be accumulated or retaken, etc.; personal characteristics can be modified (if the candidates himself chooses) and serious problem students found and assisted by the university in seeking help; oral and written communication skills can be taught and speech-hearing controlled or lived with. Counseling is critical at this point.

The second screening point should follow the bulk of the candidates education, maybe after at least 3 1/2 years. Presumably the subject major and minor course work will be finished and the bulk of methodology classes completed.

At this point the GPA in the major-minor academic areas should be consulted. An average of 3.2 seems reasonable knowledge base to permit the candidate to student teach. Fligor and Downing[31] found about 8% of their candidates would be eliminated by this stand, a state college one heavily engaged in teacher training.

A second test to be applied at this point would be the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory. Vernon[32] reports moderate validities between this test and teacher competence probably because there is to measure an attitude toward children. While studies I have encountered do not all demonstrate a relationship at this time, there was more consistent evidence of a relationship with the MTAI to warrant continued study. As with the CPI mentioned earlier, any scoring on this test should accompany counseling--looking to describe the individuals score and how he relates to others with similar experience levels, having taken the test.

Finally, because of the positive relationship reported earlier between self-concept and success as a student teacher, I would recommend the administration of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale prior to the student teaching experience. Again, severe personal instability should probably be prevented from entering the classroom and is yet to be counseled. Many of you have found that the student teaching experience can be traumatic for some of our beginning teachers. Perhaps had we identified those not yet sure enough of themselves and who they are Mosier[33] writes that "know theyself" may be the first precept for teaching.

Should the student deviate significantly from pre-determined patterns on any of these, he ought to be talked with, counseled and perhaps prohibited from student teaching at this point.

The final screening period, following the student teaching experience and prior to provisional certification would include: supervisor recommendations, campus advisor in the teaching program. Further, successful completion of any academic work. Finally, the National Teacher Examination. The NTE tests two different levels of education: professional and general. The professional asks questions that pertain to five roles played by the teacher: agent of culture; planner and organizer of instruction; overseer of classroom climate; the mediation of learning and instruction; the measurer and evaluator of learning.[34] While arbitrary scores are required in some states as mentioned earlier, the guideline seems to be standard deviations from the national (or state) norms. The tests, taken at this time, as Greene asserts,[35] force a review and integration of learning. Following the student teaching experience seems the best time. Of course, any retake seems to me permissable should the candidate not perform well.

Three further comments: (1) the increase in testing, particularly the tests of attitude and personality need to be supported by professional counsel-

ing of the candidates, supplied freely by the training instituted to guide the student; (2) the purpose is not to punish the candidate but to keep him assessed of where he is in relation to others; (3) following the recommendation of Wiggins,[36] Dean of the School of Education at Cleveland State University, any program of screening needs a "paper only" period. That is, all criteria are applied to candidates over a three year period on "paper only." Then, compare the results of the screening with the products, and the numbers who might have been eliminated.

We have the potential sophistication to construct and cleverly measure personalities, attitudes, a performance competencies that make up the teacher who maximizes the student learning. Through the national office the potential exists to collect national data constructing intellectual, personal and professional profiles of successful speech teachers. I recommend the national office begin organizing to collect such data so that standards of comparison can be compiled. We can respond to the current teacher crisis by creating a better product. Screening is one way to do that. We ought to take advantage of these to, hopefully, improve the quality of those speech teachers who will follow us.

Footnotes

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